

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

28

OCI No. 3143/63

28 October 1963

VIETNAMESE SUMMARY SUPPLEMENT
(Information as of 1100 EST)

1. Madame Nhu speaks to the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco at noon today (1500 EST) at about the same time that Ambassador Adlai Stevenson holds a press conference nearby to issue a "major statement" regarding South Vietnam's touring First Lady.

2. Ambassador Stevenson and Mme. Nhu have been sparring at a distance ever since unruly UN-haters mobbed Stevenson in Dallas Thursday night. Friday's press reports from Dallas highlighted Mme. Nhu's comment that the incident probably showed that Texans "are fed up with persons who are soft on Communism." She has progressively toned down this statement, claiming she was misquoted. She now says Texans explained to her that Stevenson was mobbed by people who think he is soft on Communism. Even as she shoved the attribution two steps away, however, she added "If it is true...then some people in the US are not safe from Communism."

3. The ambassador, meanwhile, first commented that the press was giving too much publicity to the remarks of a woman whose government attacks newsmen, and later remarked that it would not be appropriate to discuss her visit since she is not here in any official capacity and besides, he had never met her.

4. In Dallas Friday Mme. Nhu also commented that Ambassador Lodge is behaving "more like a Governor-General" than an Ambassador, and that she doesn't mind being called the Dragon Lady since the Dragon, in the Orient, is the "sign of everything good."

5. She then flew on to Phoenix, Ariz., where she told an evening dinner sponsored by the local chapter of Sigma Delta Chi, national professional journalists' association, that some newspapers, particularly the New York Times and the Washington Post, were "unfriendly" and had distorted her visit to the US and her purpose. Local papers, however, had generally been fair, and the American people "get friendlier the farther west I go."

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

She insisted there is freedom of speech in South Vietnam. She also said she did not see why President Diem's Catholic religion should be an issue, and noted that only five of the 17 cabinet members are Catholics.

Her estranged father, Tran Van Chuong, who told a University of Missouri audience Friday that President Diem is forcing the Vietnamese people to choose between suicide and Communism, is to speak to the Phoenix Sigma Delta Chi two weeks after his daughter.

6. From Phoenix Mme. Nhu flew to Los Angeles, where she told a midnight press conference she was "absolutely tired."

7. Saturday noon Mme. Nhu addressed the Los Angeles World Affairs Council a day behind Ambassador Stevenson. She marked South Vietnam's National Day by calling for a moment of silence to mourn American and Vietnamese dead in the war against the Viet Cong.

Asked about reports of secret negotiations with North Vietnam, she said she wouldn't be surprised if Ho Chi Minh tried to make a deal since he is losing, and quipped that even if the reports are true, "the Vietnamese government would not tell me just because they are afraid that I may repeat it to you."

She said that while she has no official position, she can control Vietnamese elections because she is backed by the women of Vietnam, with half the vote. The male half, she said, is splintered by men who believe they can "replace the president."

8. Saturday evening Mme. Nhu was guest at a private dinner given by Walter P. Coombs, executive director of the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, and then retired early. Daughter Le Thuy took a two-hour tour of Hollywood night spots with her new escort, Bruce B. Baxter III of Corpus Christi, Tex. Baxter, 24-year-old nephew of Dudley Dougherty at whose Beeville, Tex., ranch the Nhu party stayed last Thursday, took Le Thuy skeetshooting Thursday, followed her to Los Angeles in his private plane, and has decided to accompany the party until the Nhuses leave the US.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

9. Sunday Mme. Nhu went to mass at a Beverly Hills church, then left for San Francisco. On her way back from mass she was informed of the latest Buddhist suicide, and commented that "suicide is a crime," but conceded the victim was "trying to reach Paradise by doing what he thinks is right." In San Francisco, sitdown pickets of the "Ad Hoc Committee to End the War in Vietnam" blocked two entrances to her hotel, but she was taken in by a third route. The pickets were headed by Vincent Hallinan, Progressive presidential candidate in 1952.

San Francisco authorities had a security force of 130 men and women on duty at the airport, including an escort of more than 30 motorcycle officers, and another 65 on duty at the hotel 13 miles away. Mme. Nhu's party stepped from the plane to a waiting limousine without approaching the picketed terminal building. A special force of burly officers (at least 6'2", averaging 240 lbs.,) has been assigned to her for her San Francisco stay.

10. Her aides are vague on whether she will fulfill a speaking engagement at a San Francisco hotel tonight, or another in the University of California gymnasium at Berkeley tomorrow. They are also vague on her departure plans and route home. (She had been tentatively scheduled to leave for Tokyo Tuesday.) The University's Student Senate met in emergency session Friday and passed a resolution asking "those students who wish to express disapproval of the South Vietnam regime symbolized by Madame Nhu to maintain a complete silence, in the spirit of mourning, during the time of Madame Nhu's presence on campus Tuesday."

11. Her aides were attempting to determine whether Mme. Nhu would have to walk through pickets to reach the campus, but she herself shrugged it all off: "I have found the American people very human and understanding. I will leave this country with a great feeling of courage."

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~